

***Petiveria alliacea* L. (Phytolaccaceae): A New Record for Peninsular India**

Dhruvan Tandyekkal, Mathew Dan

Tropical Botanic Garden and Research Institute
Palode - 695 562, Kerala, India

and

Philip Mathew

Department of Botany
University of Calicut, 673 635, Kerala, India

Abstract

Petiveria alliacea L., a native of Central America, had been reported earlier to occur in wild in West Bengal of India. This is the first report of this species in Peninsular part of the country. Detailed description, illustration and relevant notes are provided.

INTRODUCTION

Petiveria alliacea L. is a Central American species which got naturalized in some parts of the world. In India, it was first reported to have got naturalized in West Bengal (Dutta & Mitra, 1961; Ghosh & Sikdar, 1983). Sivarajan and Indira Balachandran (1987) while discussing on the medicinal properties of plants of Phytolaccaceae, incidentally mentioned its occurrence in India, but without specific area of its distribution. Since then, there has been no specific report of the species as occurring in other parts of the country.

During the course of the studies on aromatic plants of Kerala, this species was collected from waste lands of Thiruvananthapuram district in Kerala state where it was found growing in sizeable populations. The present collection, therefore, forms a new record of the species for Peninsular India. A detailed description, illustration and relevant notes are provided for easy identification.

Petiveria alliacea L., Sp. Pl. 342. 1753; Walter in Engl., Pflanzreich 39: 118. 1909; Backer in Fl. Males. Ser. I, 4: 230. 1951; Dutta & Mitra, Ind. For. 87: 304. 1961; Backer & Bakh. f., Fl. Java 1: 227. 1963; Nayar *et al.*, Bull. Bot. Surv. India 15: 225. 1973; Bennet, Fl. Howrah Dist. 146. 1979. (Fig. 1).

Dhruvan Tandyekkal et al.

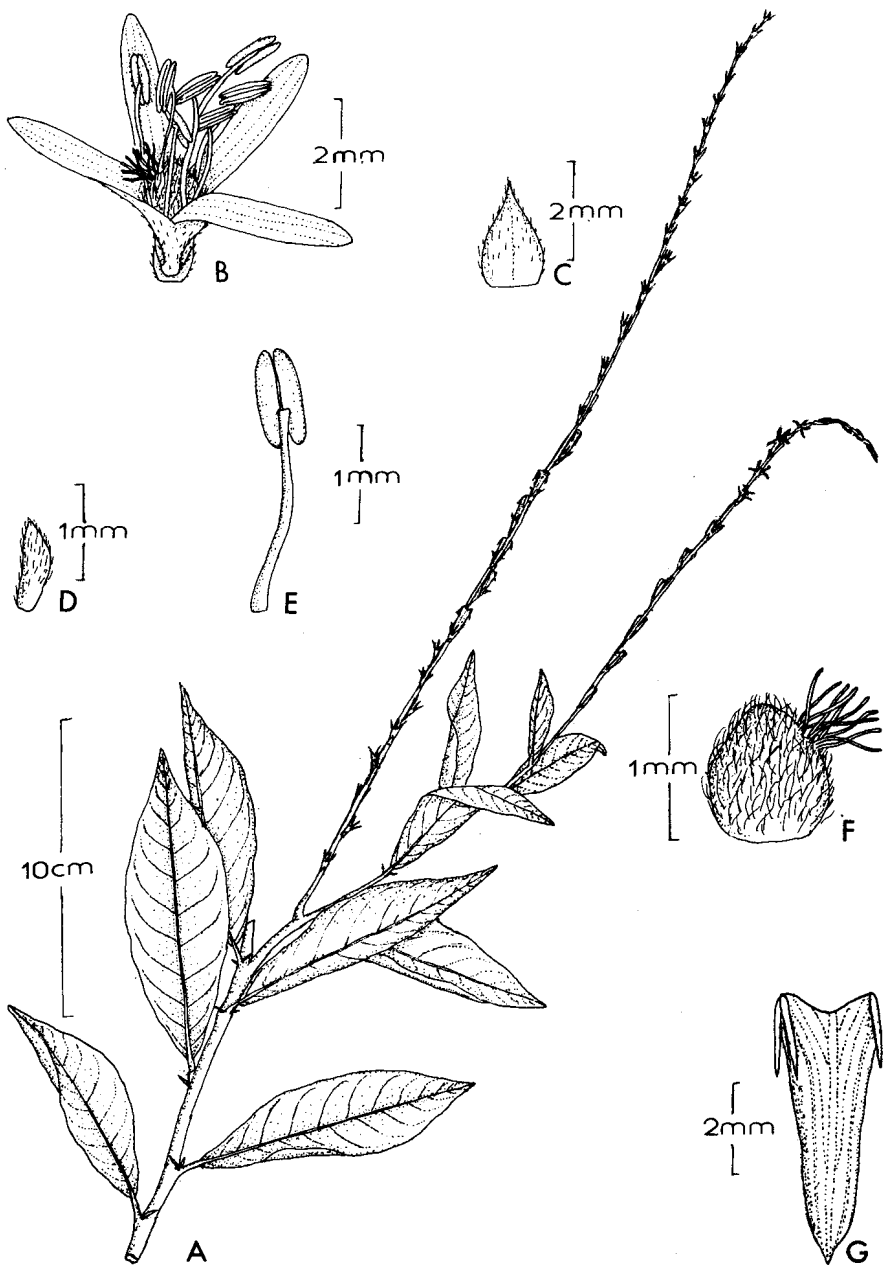


Fig. 1. *Petiveria alliacea* L. A. Flowering shoot; B. Flower; C. Bract; D. Bracteole; E. Stamen; F. Pistil; G. Fruit.

***Petiveria alliacea* L., a new record**

Petiveria follis Browne in Hist. Jam. 274. 1789.

Petiveria foetida Salisb., Prodr. 214. 1796.

Branched, foetid, undershrubs, 0.5 - 1.5 m tall. Stem grey, rough, glabrous; young branches greenish - purple, puberulous; internodes 2-4 cm long. Leaves alternate, elliptic-obovate, 5-14 x 2-6 cm, nearly glabrous attenuate, acute or obtuse at base, acute to acuminate, mucronate at apex, margin undulate or sub-entire, secondary nerves 12-14 pairs, prominent beneath; petiole slender, 0.5-1.5 x 0.2-0.3 cm, pale purple, pubescent; stipules subulate greenish, spreading, 2-3 mm long, minutely pubescent. Flowers 20-30 in lax spiral or terminal or leaf-opposed, spiciform, erect 10-35 cm long, purple-green, puberulous; racemes with drooping tips; bracts to 2 mm long, ovate-acuminate, puberulous, persistent; bracteoles oblong-acute, slightly curved, puberulous, persistent; each flower to 0.6 cm across; pedicels to 0.5 mm long, pale-purple, pubescent; perianth lobes 4, persistent, petaloid, oblong-obtuse, 3.5 x 1 mm, pale rose or cream turning green and scarious with age, imbricate, connate at base; stamens 4-8, 2-3 mm long, alternately short and long, inserted on hypogynous disc; filaments 1.7-2.8 mm long, pale purple; anthers oblong, 2-celled, white to pale yellow, 1 mm long; ovary 1-carpellate, globose, 1 mm long, greenish, white-wooly; stigmas filamentous, sessile, white turning yellowish brown with age, eccentric on the ventral side of ovary. Fruit elongate-obconic, to 7 mm long, dark-brown, covered at base by 4-persistent perianth segments, tip with 4 curved spines, 2 mm long. Seed solitary, erect, linear, adnate to pericarp; cotyledons unequal, leafy.

Distribution: Native of Central America; naturalized in West Java, West Indies, Jamaica, Mexico, Brazil, Malayan Archipelago and India (West Bengal and Kerala).

Ecology: Found growing luxuriently in waste places and along roadsides in plane areas of Thiruvananthapuram Dist.

Flowering & Fruiting: June - March.

Specimens studied: Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram Dist.: Thiruvananthapuram City, *Dhruvan* 29283 (TBGT); Nedumangadu, *Dhruvan* 34624 (TBGT).

Acknowledgements

The authors are grateful to Dr. P. Pushpangadan, Director, Tropical Botanic Garden and Research Institute, Palode, Thiruvananthapuram for providing facilities for carrying out the work and to Dr. V. George, Head, Phytochemistry division, TBGRI for encouragement.

Literature cited

Dutta, N. M. & D. Mitra, 1961. Three newly recorded plants from West Bengal. *Ind. For.* 87: 304-308.

Dhruvan Tandyekkal et al.

- Ghosh, R. B. & J. K. Sikdar, 1983. A revision of the Indian Phytolaccaceae (*sensu lato*). *J. Econ. Tax. Bot.* 4: 153-163.
- Sivarajan, V.V. & Indu Balachandran, 1987. In pursuit of new herbal sources for Indian medicine. *Ancient Sci. Life*, 7(1): 39-44.